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SUBJECT: A/S FRAZER'S SEPT 23 MEETING WITH MALAWI PRESIDENT MUTHARIKA

Classified By: A/S Frazer for Reason 1.4 (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: AF Assistant Secretary Jendayi E. Frazer met with Malawi President Bingu wa Mutharika September 23 on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Mutharika discussed Malawi's success in increasing its food capacity, which allowed it to become a net food exporter. He said private investment in agriculture was welcome. On the upcoming elections, Mutharika said he felt international observers should be invited three months prior to election day and that if any rigging takes place, the opposition parties would be responsible. Mutharika said he hopes new Presidential elections would be held soon in Zimbabwe, preferably within two years. Finally, Mutharika called Malawi a success story in the fight against HIV/AIDS. END SUMMARY

12. (C) A/S Frazer met with Malawi President Mutharika September 23 on the margins of the UNGA and discussed the issues described below.

13. (C) Food Crisis and Fuel Prices: A/S Frazer asked Mutharika how the global food crisis and rising fuel prices had impacted Malawi. Mutharika described GOM's food subsidy program, which aims to develop capacity to allow farmers to move beyond subsistence agriculture. He noted fertilization and seed improvement distribution programs had drastically increased yields and he called the results from such programs "spectacular". He added the success in agriculture helped mitigate to some degree the negative impact of rising fuel prices on Malawi. Malawi is now able to export maize despite having been a net food importer as recently as 2004. He said Malawi now has even donated food to some of its neighbors. The GOM is making an effort to build stocks, hoping to have 200,000 metric tons of maize available soon. Mutharika also asked for assistance from the international community to further develop Malawi's agriculture capacity and said private investment in that sector was welcome.

14. (C) Elections: A/S Frazer pressed Mutharika on GOM efforts to ensure free and fair elections in Malawi in 2009. Mutharika said the GOM is working hard to ensure the elections are free and fair and he wants a complete and thorough international observer program. He said his plan was to invite international observers to arrive three months prior to election day. He feels such an observer program is the only way to obviate efforts by the opposition to either rig the elections or muddle the result by claiming Mutharika or his Democratic Progress Party had rigged them.

15. (C) Zimbabwe: Mutharika expressed hope that implementation of the power-sharing agreement in Zimbabwe would lead to new Presidential elections within two years. He feels holding new Presidential elections sooner would allow for the situation to settle down and would offer hope to the Zimbabwe population that the country could move beyond its recent crises, political and social divisions.

16. (C) HIV/AIDS and Health Infrastructure: Mutharika said he feels Malawi is a success story in the fight against HIV/AIDS and he thanked the USG for our support. Anti-retroviral treatment (ARV) use had increased from 3,000 cases in 2004 to more than 150,000 in 2008. He added testing was increasing including among young people, and the GOM was hoping to extend the successes achieved thus far. He revealed that he had been tested to lead Malawians to know

their status.

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